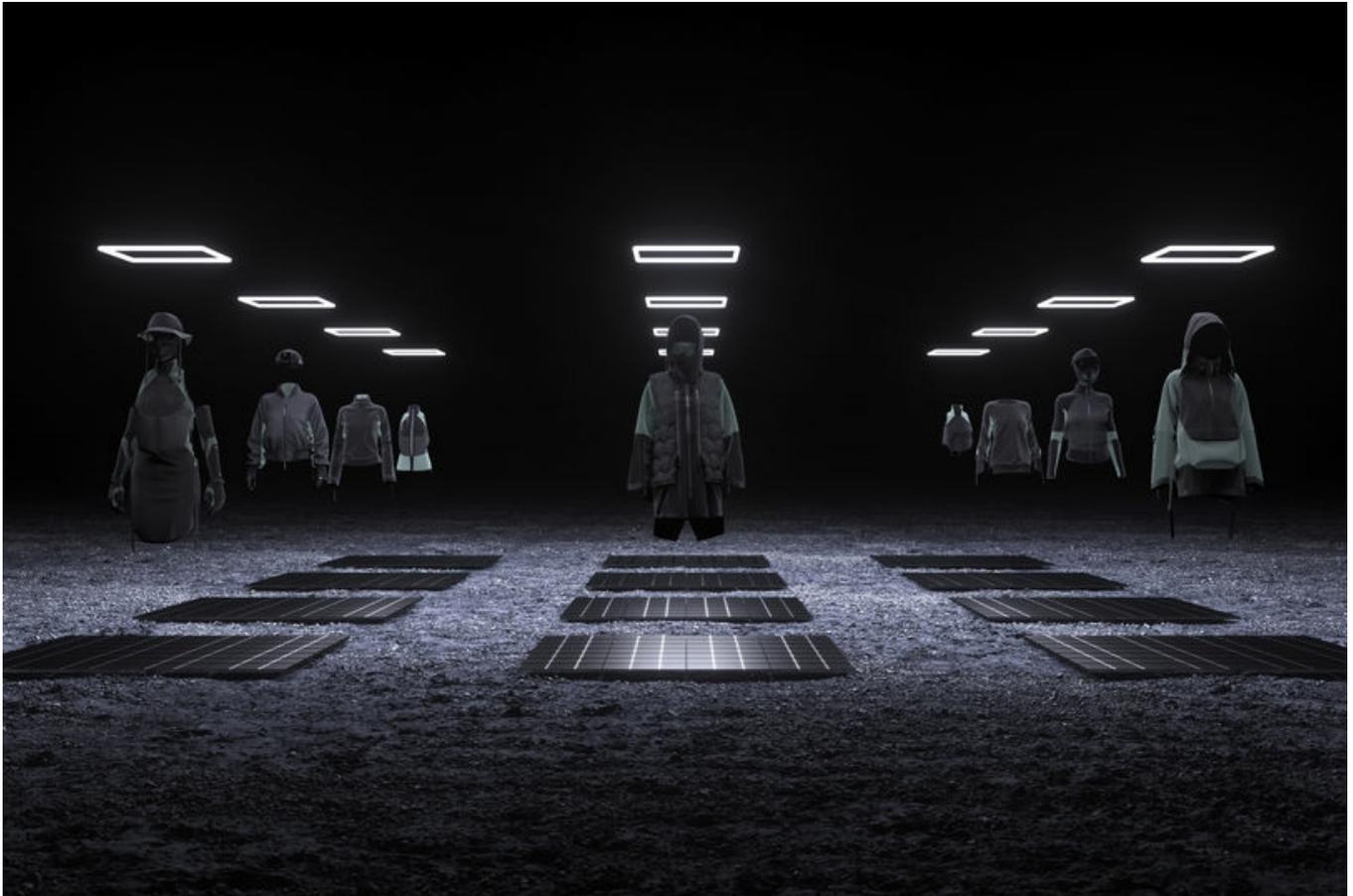


WILL AI TAKE THE FUN OUT OF FASHION?

By Sabrina Faramarzi

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For an industry that thrives on change, the use of AI might mean homogenisation over innovation, says trends analyst Sabrina Faramarzi.



‘ Digital wardrobes may end up standardising the fast fashion industry to one that simply recreates what it already circulates. ’

— Sabrina Faramarzi, trends analyst

It's usually science fiction that predicts future technologies, but it was actually 1995's cult teen film **Clueless** that showcased to mainstream audiences the possibility of an automated, digital wardrobe driven by a form of artificial intelligence (AI).

The accelerated use of AI in fashion has changed the consumer landscape. No other industry has access to the kind of dataset that fashion does, and digital wardrobe management services are making ripe use of it. Digital wardrobes – personal inventory systems that do everything from automatically match outfits for you to getting your dry cleaning organised – are infiltrating the consumer market, and **these AI-powered systems** are beginning to offer the promise of a highly individual, streamlined and personal clothing and fashion ecosystem for everybody.

At a time when, on average, people have **36 outfits** in their wardrobe that they never wear and **87% of fashion** goes to landfill or is incinerated, companies such as Save Your Wardrobe and Finery are encouraging consumers to use what they already have and be more conscious about their purchases.

For many, the reason fashion is fun is because of discovery – that moment of finding something you never thought you might like. Yet, with the use of AI **climbing 270%** over the past four years, will the growth of digital wardrobe systems, and the data sold from these apps to designers and fashion houses, end up creating more homogenous fashion all-round? Will AI take the fun out of fashion?

If digital wardrobes, which function by promoting convenience, sustainability and buying advice tailored to consumers' wardrobes, crunch their data successfully, they may end up standardising the fast fashion industry to one that simply recreates what it already circulates.



Solventus 2019 collection by Neuro

This is already being shown in the commercial interiors space, where Instagrammable coffee shops and Airbnb homes around the world have adopted the same aesthetic of untreated wood tables, Edison light bulbs and Eames chairs. Dubbed **Airspace**, this singular aesthetic has allowed people to travel all over the world but still feel like they're home. As Jess Cartner-Morley, fashion journalist at The Guardian **notes**, 'It is easy to imagine a similar process taking place in our wardrobes, once facsimile style advice is being beamed into each of our homes.'

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If AI-powered digital wardrobes re-programme the fashion industry to make more of what people already like, will there be any space left for newness, serendipity, creativity and spontaneity? We know that the best moments in fashion history were those where designers made something that nobody knew they wanted until they saw it. If those designers had listened to sales figures, market research or – as of today – AI, those audacious moments of fashion history would have been forever lost to utility, perhaps even a less radical version of **normcore**.

One solution being touted as a way to provide novelty in fashion while upholding sustainability and creativity is **virtual clothing**, but for many consumers it remains gimmicky and elitist, and lacks the tactility that fashion both thrives and relies upon. How, then, do we fight the human urge for newness? Any sustainable, convenience-led solution needs to be on par with a consumers' desire to feel like an individual. In my view, the industry's true problem is not that it can't be fully sustainable with the help of AI and technology, but that in the process, it risks no longer being fashion – just mere clothing.